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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2447
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0849
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2840
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2225
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000235

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR A/DAS SPRATLEN'S MARCH 14-19 VISIT
TO KYRGYZSTAN

REF: A. BISHKEK 195

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 178

[1](#)C. 07 BISHKEK 1421

[1](#)D. 07 STATE 147334

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) In addition to meetings with government officials, opposition politicians, and civil society leaders, your March 14 to 19 visit to Kyrgyzstan will be marked by two key events: the second meeting of the Comprehensive Policy Dialogue and the signing of Kyrgyzstan's Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Country Program. The Comprehensive Policy Dialogue, which was established to put the bilateral relationship back on track following a rough period in 2006 (Ref D), will review security cooperation, economic development, democratic and political reform, and the role of U.S. assistance in these areas. Two years after Kyrgyzstan was determined to be eligible for a Threshold Program, the launching of the MCA Threshold Program will bring U.S. technical assistance to help with much-needed reforms in the judiciary, the procuracy, and law enforcement. Foreign Minister Karabayev will be looking to increase cooperation in several areas, and he will present specific suggestions. He will also press for an official visit for President Bakiyev to Washington in 2008. While you will want to promote active engagement, you will also need to manage Kyrgyz expectations of greater assistance and an official visit.

Changed Political Landscape

[1](#)2. (C) Since your last visit in November 2007 (Ref C), the political landscape has changed, with the presidential administration further consolidating power. Deeply flawed elections in December gave the pro-presidential Ak Jol party complete control of the parliament, with the "constructive opposition" Social Democrats and the Communists gaining a few

seats each and the largest opposition party, Ata Meken, excluded altogether. The new Prime Minister, Igor Chudinov, a Bakiyev loyalist, is focused on economic development. Bakiyev's family members are playing an increasingly important, though behind-the-scenes, role in economic matters, with son Maxim reportedly involved in a number of business takeovers.

Bakiyev Away

¶3. (C) It is no doubt a sign of how confident the administration is that it controls the levers of power that President Bakiyev has gone to Germany for a "short vacation" until March 16, according to the presidential press service. Other sources tell us that Bakiyev is in Germany for medical treatment, and he will not return until the end of the month. Although there are no signs pointing to incapacity, if Bakiyev were unable to carry out his duties as president, Speaker of Parliament Madumarov would assume executive authority.

Continued Pressure on Opposition

¶4. (C) Despite (or perhaps because of) its strong position, the government has continued to put pressure on opposition leaders, including through tax investigations, court cases, and even physical intimidation. As a result, some from the opposition have left politics altogether, and others, such as Ata Meken leader Tekebayev, are remaining quiet for now, focusing on party building and the municipal elections scheduled for the fall. The opposition remains disunited, and it lacks any sort of coherent platform.

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¶5. (C) One opposition group has formed a "people's parliament," led by former Legislative Assembly Speaker Erkebayev as its "speaker," with the stated goal of discussing and proposing alternative views. The Ministry of Justice was quick to label the group illegal, although it has taken no formal action against the group. Another opposition figure, former MP Azimbek Beknazarov has formed a "revolutionary committee," has called on Bakiyev to resign, and has called for demonstrations on March 24 (the third anniversary of the "tulip revolution"). Beknazarov has also announced plans (and reportedly received permission) for a demonstration starting March 15 in front of the Parliament to protest the Aksy events (when six protesters died in a clash with police in 2002). It is not clear that Beknazarov has enough support to draw crowds to his planned protests.

Opportunity for Progress?

¶6. (C) Government officials have told us that increased authority following the constitutional referendum -- and the absence of an "obstructionist" parliament -- will allow them to go forward with economic, judicial, and law enforcement reforms, and we have seen a few encouraging signs. For example, Minister of Internal Affairs Kongantiyev has told us that he wants to reform his ministry to place emphasis on crime prevention and establishing partnerships with communities. He has reached out to NGOs to form working groups to address upgrading prison conditions, preventing youth crime, and assisting the homeless (Ref B). Minister of Energy Balkibekov recently outlined plans for a new tariff policy, which, along with privatization of distribution assets, would allow for greater investment to rehabilitate Kyrgyzstan's dated electricity infrastructure (Ref A). Both Kongantiyev and Balkibekov appear eager to work with us on specific assistance projects.

Meeting with Karabayev and the CPD

¶7. (C) In your last meeting with Foreign Minister Karabayev in November 2007, you stressed the importance of the December parliamentary elections as an indicator of the country's direction on political reform. Karabayev will likely defend the elections, claiming that they weren't "as bad as Georgia's," and pointing to the increased representation of women, minorities, and youth in the new parliament. He may also argue that the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections were necessary to settle distracting political issues and "strengthen statehood," so that the government could move ahead with economic reform and development. You will be the first high-level visitor since the elections, and it will be important to underscore Washington's concern about Kyrgyzstan's steps backwards on democracy.

¶8. (C) For Karabayev, the Comprehensive Policy Dialogue (or "bilateral consultations," as the Kyrgyz refer to the meeting), presents a chance to discuss current cooperation, as well as to identify new projects for joint efforts and/or U.S. assistance. He envisions a somewhat informal discussion, with each side making presentations on particular points. Karabayev has given us a draft list of project proposals in the political sphere, the security sphere, and the economic sphere -- evidence that the Kyrgyz want to engage with us on a number of levels. Some of these proposals are already being addressed through current or upcoming U.S. programs, and Karabayev also seeks to enlist us to help bring U.S. businesses and investors to Kyrgyzstan. At the top of Karabayev's agenda, however, will be arranging a visit for President Bakiyev to the U.S. in 2008.

MCA Threshold Country Program

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¶9. (C) Two years after Kyrgyzstan was determined to be eligible for a Threshold Program, the agreement to implement Kyrgyzstan's Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Country Program will be signed March 14. This program will bring U.S. technical assistance to help promote reforms in the judiciary, the procuracy, and law enforcement, and successful completion of the program will result in significant improvement to the rule of law, as well as greater checks against corruption. You will be meeting with the officials responsible for implementation of these reforms, including Minister of Internal Affairs Kongantiyev, Prosecutor General Satybaldiyev, Chief Justice Aliyeva, and Minister of Justice Kaiypov

Objectives for the Visit

¶10. (C) As you will be the first high-level visitor since the elections, it will be important to deliver Washington's concerns about the conduct of the elections, as well as to emphasize the need to move forward on democratic reform generally. Witnessing the Threshold Program signing and meeting with key officials responsible for implementation of the program will provide the opportunity to convey our commitment to help promote the rule of law, but also to point out that MCC assistance is tied to a country's progress on all indicators -- and the Kyrgyz government needs to demonstrate the political will to improve those indicators.

¶11. (C) The Comprehensive Policy Dialogue presents a forum for discussing ways to broaden the focus of our relationship beyond security and Base-related issues. Karabayev wants to intensify cooperation, and he will be looking for results. Although it may be difficult to identify new "deliverables" out of this CPD meeting, Karabayev's draft list of projects is more specific and constructive than previous laundry lists of assistance or "investment" requests. While you will want to promote this active engagement, it will also be important

to manage Kyrgyz expectations, whether on the possibility of additional assistance or the prospects for an official visit to Washington.

YOVANOVITCH